

Namaste City Council members,

My name is Som Subedi. I am the Engagement Coordinator at Portland Parks & Recreation.

My job is to help integrate refugees and immigrants into city life as early possible by increasing recreational access, creating culturally responsive programs, and partnering with city bureaus and, refugee and immigrant communities.

Growing up in a refugee camp and getting an education 10,000 miles away didn't prepare me to be in this vast bureaucratic western system. I didn't know how to use outlook calendar upon my hiring as a seasonal employee.

As one of the few refugees hired by the city, I have to represent refugees and immigrants well by working extra hard. Giving back is not easy, especially in recent years. Federal funding and support have sharply dropped, pressuring local governments and staff to go above and beyond to engage and build community.

I am so proud of my diverse team at work. My accent and writings are patiently and politely accepted and my "welcome to America, Som" moments are surprising. It may take years, but I try every single day to be better. I write down new words and phrases. I have my volunteer mentor check my grammar. I wish American English wasn't my 5th language, but I do my best to communicate and those around me are great listeners.

I have a very social job. I reach out to ethnic stores, community gardens, cultural events, and diverse soccer practices. I meet with community leaders and members at mosques and temples. And of course, Facebook has blocked me more than 100 times because, "you're inviting people too fast."

Success to me is measured:

- When, within five days of arrival in Portland from a refugee camp, a young soccer player participates in the Portland World Soccer Tournament.
- When churches and mosques cancel services to join the event
- When two singles (an immigrant & American born) meet at an event, get married, and come back to share their story
- When community members communicate on Facebook in languages other than English
- When an initiative brings new refugee and immigrant families into the community centers.
- When a 9-year-old wants to come back and volunteer at an event again the following year
- When community partnerships double in the second year of engaging
- When the program gets published in 9 different media within 3 months

One of my proudest moments was receiving the 2017 Parks Champion National Award in New Orleans from the National Recreation and Park Association. I also received the Immigrant of the Year award, the Oregon Immigrant Achievement Award, and the Philips Diversity Award among others.

I couldn't have done it without the generosity and compassion of community members present here today, City Council and my bureau! I have turned past challenges into opportunities and here I am ready for another decade.

It's a privilege and an honor to serve Portlanders.

# Whereas

*Whereas,* Portland is proud to be an inclusive, welcoming, and sanctuary city;  
and

*Whereas,* Portland Parks & Recreation formed Parks for New Portlanders in  
2015 to help welcome and integrate refugee and immigrant  
communities in to Portland; and

*Whereas,* Parks for New Portlanders provides many annual culturally-specific  
events; and

*Whereas,* this year, in partnership with Adidas, Parks for New Portlanders  
celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its most popular program,  
Portland World Soccer, which engaged more than 500 refugee and  
immigrant youth and their families; and

*Whereas,* this summer, Parks for New Portlanders hosted its 3<sup>rd</sup> annual WALK  
with Refugees & Immigrants, with over 3,000 attendees; and

*Whereas,* this summer, Parks for New Portlanders also celebrated the 5<sup>th</sup>  
annual PDX World Refugee Day; and

*Whereas,* Parks for New Portlanders, in partnership with local organizations,  
non-profits, resettlement agencies, City bureaus, and volunteers,  
provides a vital service for the City of Portland in celebrating  
diversity and multiculturalism;

*Now, therefore,* I, Ted Wheeler, Mayor of the City of Portland, Oregon, the  
“City of Roses,” do hereby proclaim August 28, 2019 to be

*Parks for New Portlanders Day*

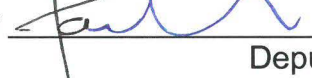
in Portland, and encourage all residents to observe this day.

Proclaim August 28, 2019 to be Parks for New Portlanders Day  
(Proclamation introduced by Mayor Wheeler and Commissioner Fish)

AUG 28 2019

**PLACED ON FILE**Filed AUG 20 2019

**MARY HULL CABALLERO**  
Auditor of the City of Portland

By  Deputy

COMMISSIONERS VOTED AS FOLLOWS:		
	YEAS	NAYS
1. Fritz		
2. Fish		
3. Hardesty		
4. Eudaly		
Wheeler		